

A2

16. (Amended) An optical reader for scanning-decoding at least one optically encoded symbol, the optical reader comprising:

- a communications interface adapted to communicate with an external device;
- an imaging assembly for scanning the at least one optically encoded signal to thereby produce digital imaging data; and
- processing means for,
 - receiving the digital imaging data from the imaging assembly,
 - decoding the digital imaging data in accordance with an optical reader program stored in an optical reader memory,
 - loading an externally generated program into the optical reader memory via the communications interface, the externally generated program corresponding to a new task, and
 - executing the externally generated program to thereby perform the new task, whereby executing the externally generated program includes replacing at least a portion of the optical reader program.

A3

19. (Amended) A method for instructing an optical reader to perform a task it is not programmed to perform, the method comprising:

- loading an externally generated program into a memory located in the optical reader;
- and
- executing the externally generated program to perform the task, whereby the step of executing the externally generated program includes replacing a portion of the optical reader program.

A4

34. (Amended) A reprogrammable optical reader system, the optical reader system having a program stored in memory, the system comprising:

- a programming source having at least one software program, the at least one software corresponding to a predetermined task;
- a transmission facility coupled to the programming source for transmitting the at least one software program; and
- an optical reader coupled to the transmission facility, the optical reader being configured to receive and execute the at least one software program to thereby